



# BREMERTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Chief Strachan's Weekly Update

**The moons, something in the water, the stars are aligned...not sure why, but dangerous and unpredictable calls related to mental illness have absolutely dominated the week here at BPD:**

We started out last Saturday night with a man, who was reportedly feeling as if he was being chased, jumping off of the departing ferry. His psychosis caused him to continue to thrash in the water and try to avoid being rescued. Employees from the ferry jumped into action with their rescue boat, and BPD officers assisted in literally fighting him onto the raft. He eventually became so tired and scared of the water and cold he relented. He was taken to Harrison Hospital for an evaluation.

On Wednesday night, Dispatch sent officers to an address on 4th Street from a friend of the man involved, who was reportedly barricaded in his bathroom, armed and suicidal. Officers set up a team with a ballistic shield and a "less lethal" weapon. The man was talking to officers through a small bathroom window where they could not see him. He said he had a bat, knives and that he had barricaded himself inside the residence. Officer Matt Thuring patiently spoke with the man through the window. You have probably seen in movies when police put a "throw-phone" inside a house to have the barricaded suspect talk to them. In this case, it was reversed. The man threw a phone out of the room. Officer Thuring picked it up and the man started talking to him via the phone. The man stated he wanted to kill himself. Officer Thuring was able to talk the man outside and onto the porch. The man appeared very nervous and paranoid, but he was secured quietly and without incident. A check of the residence revealed exactly what the man said he had - and more. Bats, knives and barricaded areas were all there. This was an outstanding job of good, calm communication by Officer Thuring. We learned this man had been released from a mental health evaluation at the hospital about two hours earlier.

You may have heard of "Spice", a substance that can be available at some retail stores that is used to create some sort of hallucinogenic effect. It is often viewed as synthetic cannabis, and can also be a combination of other drugs. When regulators attempt to limit its sale, the producers simply change the formula a little to get around it. We had two serious incidents this week that may have involved Spice. Wednesday night, officers responded to the Midway Inn after a 31 year old from the East Coast apparently jumped through a second story window, which was actually three stories up above the parking garage. Officers found the man on the concrete, and he was, in their words, "in very poor condition." The Fire Dept. arrived, scooped the man up, and later coordinated helicopter transport to Harborview. In checking out what had occurred, officers determined that the man had fallen in the hallway outside of his room. A helpful hotel employee assisted in getting him up and back to his room. They thought he may have had a seizure. The employee then heard the man shouting inside the room, talking with what they believed was his mother on the phone, asking if he was going to die. The man then apparently quickly got up, punched out the window with his hand, causing severe cuts, and then jumped out of the window. A marijuana smoking pipe was found next to his body. The man's cell phone was in several pieces on the concrete, and officers reassembled it so they could call the mother. A bag of "Spice" was located next to the bed. The mother confirmed the phone conversation and gave further insight into the man's frame of mind, which was described as her son having an "anxiety attack." The man is "critically stable" at Harborview and family members were on their way to assist.

On Thursday, officers were called around 4:00 PM to the area around Bay Vista in West Bremerton. The initial report was of a man in the street holding a knife to his throat. Officers located the adult, who appeared to be high on something, walking around the area and talking to himself. He refused when told to drop the knife, and as officers surrounded him to keep him from getting into areas where people were nearby, he started to aggressively walk up to officers, almost in an attempt to force a confrontation. Officers were patient and did all they could to maintain a safe perimeter, keeping other people safe while trying to control the man. Finally, using good communication skills with the man and between themselves, officers used the Taser to get the man under control. The 28 year old was on probation for robbery and assault with the Dept. of Corrections, and had no apparent connection to this area. He was transported to the hospital for a mental health evaluation. Responding medics said that indications were that he may have been using Spice, and/or had mental illness issues.

It is worth noting that one of the factors that made this situation even more dangerous to officers was that 15-20 people gathered around the officers, which made the need to keep the man with the knife under control even more important. Other than curiosity, why were there so many people gathered around? So they could record it on their camera phones, of course. The first instinct when a dangerous situation arises is no longer to make sure

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you are safe, it is to get the camera phone out. The close proximity and difficulty in communication with people staring through camera phones is making these incidents more dangerous-not because the event is being recorded, which is incidental, but because the people doing the recording are paying little or no attention to their own surroundings or safety.

As I write this report, officers are back at another address in our city with the same man - after he was released from the hospital after the incident the day before. He was again out of control and this time he injured two of our officers and will be jailed for assault. All across the country, police officers keep doing all we can to deal with dangerous and violent confrontations, often involving people with untreated mental illness issues and drug use, who are repeatedly back on the streets within hours. Then we do it all again, until it doesn't go perfectly as planned, when people will crowd in to try to get something newsworthy on their camera phone.

Yes, there were actually some incidents last week that did not involve mental illness. While stopping at a convenience store, Officer Jordan Ejde recognized a man that he knew had multiple arrest warrants walking into the store. The man did a classic double-take, and went back outside to pump gas. In an effort to make sure everything was on the down low, he then very cleverly covered his face with a bandana. A man with a bandana over his face at a convenience store-yeah, that won't draw attention. Officers confronted the man in the parking lot, and placed him into custody on the warrants. He didn't even have time to ditch his meth.

Monday afternoon a man and his ex-girlfriend had been arguing, and he started moving out of the apartment. He was attempting to leave when he was hit in the head with a frozen chicken. As Sgt. Olson recounted:

*"The male cried 'fowl' and called 911 to report the incident. They have been living together in the apartment for about a year. The male was apparently feeling a little 'cooped-up' and wanted to move out. He wanted to take some of the food from the refrigerator. The ex-girlfriend got her feathers up and initially told him that for all he ate while he was there, he didn't need to take any food. He walked toward the door and got hit in the back of the head by the package of frozen chicken. The ex-girlfriend had thrown the frozen block of poultry pieces across the room and 'clucked' him in the head. The impact caused some minor swelling to the back of his head and redness by one ear. The officer contacted the woman. Using his investigative skills the officer confronted her with the fact that chickens can't fly. Realizing the downfall in her plan, she admitted she threw the frozen fowl, but not directly at him. She conceded that it could have bounced and hit him. She was arrested for Domestic Violence."*



*That would hurt*

Last week, Officer Matt Strombach delivered coffee and hot chocolate, courtesy of the Wheaton Way Starbucks, to crossing guards at Naval Avenue Elementary. Matt took over crossing duty so the guards could take a well-earned break. We really appreciate all they do all year long!



Finally last week, among all these stories of mental illness, confrontations with our officers, and all the challenges related to this job, we are also reminded of why we joined

Rodney Harker  
Russell Holt  
David Hughes  
Jeffrey Inklebarger  
Kent Mayfield  
Kelly Meade  
Jonathan Meador  
James Miller  
Michael Nelson  
Steven Polonsky  
William Prouse  
Rodney Rauback  
Johnny Rivera  
Dahle Roessel  
Donnell Rogers  
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Michael Davis  
William Endicott  
Ryan Heffernan  
Randy Plumb  
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Billy Renfro  
Mark Thompson  
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Luis Olan  
Pete Fisher  
**CAPTAINS**  
James Burchett  
Tom Wolfe  
**CHIEF**  
Steven Strachan

this profession in the first place.

I received a handwritten note in the mail this week from a woman who lives in East Bremerton. The writing is a little shaky and hard to read, and is in the style of cursive writing your grandmother used:

*To Chief Strachan:*

*It has been a great consolation to grow old in a city with such a superior police force and ambulance service. My husband is 101 years old and I am almost 88 years old. We are without family so we have used both of you for survival. Life at times is very difficult for old people and we need you so much. Recently I got myself in a situation that almost beat me. I called for help and Officer Steven Polonsky and Officer Michelle Greisheimer came out. They were wonderful, to say the least. They gave me back my courage. Thank you all.*

Attached to it was a check for \$300 to "Bremerton Police General Fund". Of course, we don't accept payment for any kind of service, though we know it is well-intended. The check will be returned with a note of thanks to the couple for their kindness.

As I read the note, I thought about if this couple were my parents or grandparents, and it helps us remember why we are so proud to serve in this honorable profession. It sounds like a cliché, but it is true - the opportunity to serve is a privilege!

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